AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 18-20, 22 and 23 without prejudice, and amend claims 3, 5, 8, 10, and 11 as provided in the following complete listing of the claims.

1. (Canceled).

2. (Canceled).

3. (Currently Amended) A data distribution apparatus comprising:

receiving means for receiving a request signal from an external source;

data storage means for storing playback data <u>and splicing data</u>;

data switching means for <u>selectively outputting the playback data, special playback data and the splicing data</u> reading from said data storage means in response to the request signal received by said receiving means, and reading splicing data from said data storage means when switching between the playback data and a special playback data or preventing an overflow or an underflow in a buffer of a data receiving terminal; <u>and</u>

transmission means for transmitting the playback data, the special playback data or the splicing data from said data switching means to the <u>a</u> data receiving terminal via a transmission medium; and,

wherein the data switching means generates the special playback data by decoding a special playback data by reading the selected playback data from said data storage means in response to a type of special playback, <u>decoding the selected playback data</u>, and encoding the decoded special playback data when the request signal indicates the special playback, <u>and</u>

<u>wherein the data switching means selectively outputs the splicing data from said data storage means when switching between the playback data and the special playback data so as to provide a continuity in the locus of used bits in a buffer of a data receiving terminal to prevent an overflow or an underflow in the buffer of the data receiving terminal.</u>

4. (ORIGINAL) A data distribution apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the splicing data comprises repeat data which is equivalent to data positioned immediately before the splicing data.

5. (Currently Amended) A data distribution apparatus comprising:

receiving means for receiving a request signal from an external source;

data storage means for storing playback data and splicing data;

decoding means for reading the playback data from said data storage means in response to a type of special playback corresponding to the request signal, and for decoding the read playback data so as to generate a special playback signal;

encoding means for encoding the special playback signal generated by said decoding means so as to generate special playback data;

data switching means for selectively outputting the playback data, the special playback data obtained by said encoding means and the splicing data read from said data storage means in response to the request signal received by said receiving means, ~~wherein the splicing data is read from said data storage means when switching between the playback data and the special playback data or when preventing an overflow or an underflow in a buffer of a receiving terminal~~ wherein the data switching means selectively outputs the splicing data from said data storage means when switching between the playback data and the special playback data so as to provide a continuity in the locus of used bits in a buffer of a data receiving terminal to prevent an overflow or an underflow in a buffer of the data receiving terminal; and

transmission means for transmitting the playback data, the special playback data or the splicing data to the data receiving terminal via a transmission medium.

6. (ORIGINAL) A data distribution apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the splicing data comprises repeat data which is equivalent to data positioned immediately before the splicing data.

7. (Canceled).

8. (Currently Amended) A data distribution method for reading special playback data from a data storage unit to a receiving terminal, said data storage unit storing playback data, and also storing the special playback data and splicing data, both of which are used for playing back the playback data in a special mode, said data distribution method comprising the steps of:

receiving a request signal from an external source;

reading the playback data from said data storage unit in response to a special playback corresponding to the request signal;

decoding the playback data so as to generate a special playback signal, and encoding the special playback signal so as to generate special playback data, wherein the special playback data is generated in response to a type of special playback;

selectively outputting the playback data, the special playback data obtained by encoding the special playback signal, and the splicing data in response to the request signal received by said receiving means, ~~wherein the splicing data is read from said data storage means when switching between the playback data and the special playback data or when preventing an overflow or an underflow in a buffer of the receiving terminal~~ wherein said selectively outputting selectively outputs the splicing data from said data storage unit when switching between the playback data and the special playback data so as to provide a continuity in the locus of used bits in a buffer of a receiving terminal to prevent an overflow or an underflow in the buffer of the receiving terminal; and

transmitting the playback data, the special playback data or the splicing data to the receiving terminal via a transmission medium.

9. (Canceled).

10. (Currently Amended) A data distribution system for distributing data which includes special playback data from a data distribution apparatus to a terminal device,

said data distribution apparatus comprising:

receiving means for receiving a request signal from an external source;

data storage means for storing playback data~~, and also storing special playback data~~ and splicing data~~, both of which are used for playing back the playback data in a special mode, wherein intra-frame encoding is used for a substantial portion of the special playback data~~;

data switching means for selectively outputting the playback data, the special playback data and the splicing data ~~reading from said data storage means~~ in response to the request signal received by said receiving means~~, and reading splicing data from said data storage means when switching between the playback data and a special playback data or preventing an overflow or an underflow in a buffer of said terminal device~~; and

transmission means for transmitting the playback data, the special playback data or the splicing data from said data switching means to said terminal device via a transmission medium,

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wherein the data switching means generates the special playback data by ~~decoding a special playback data by~~ reading ~~the~~ selected playback data from said data storage means in response to a type of special playback, <u>decoding the selected playback data</u>, and encoding the decoded special playback data when the request signal indicates the special playback, <u>and</u>

<u>wherein the data switching means selectively outputs the splicing data from said data storage means when switching between the playback data and the special playback data so as to provide a continuity in the locus of used bits in a buffer of the terminal device to prevent an overflow or an underflow in the buffer of the terminal device</u>, and

said terminal device comprising:

receiving means for receiving the data transmitted from said data distribution apparatus; and

decoding means for decoding the data received by said receiving means.

11. (Currently Amended) A data distribution system for distributing data which includes special playback data from a data distribution apparatus to a terminal device,

said data distribution apparatus comprising:

receiving means for receiving a request signal from an external source;

data storage means for storing playback data and splicing data;

decoding means for reading the playback data from said data storage means in response to ~~the~~ a type of special playback corresponding to the request signal, and for decoding the read playback data so as to generate a special playback signal;

encoding means for encoding the special playback signal generated by said decoding means so as to generate special playback data;

data switching means for selectively outputting the playback data, the special playback data obtained by said encoding means and the splicing data read from said data storage means in response to the request signal received by said receiving means, ~~wherein the splicing data is read from said data storage means when switching between the playback data and the special playback data or when preventing an overflow or an underflow in a buffer of the terminal device~~ <u>wherein the data switching means selectively outputs the splicing data from said data storage means when switching between the playback data and the special playback data so as to provide a continuity in the locus of used bits in a buffer of a data receiving terminal to prevent an overflow or an underflow in the buffer of the data receiving terminal</u>; and

transmission means for transmitting the playback data, the special playback data or the splicing data from said data switching means to said terminal device via a transmission medium, and

said terminal device comprising:

receiving means for receiving the data transmitted from said data distribution apparatus; and

decoding means for decoding the data received by said receiving means.

12.   (Canceled).

13.   (Canceled).

14.   (Canceled).

15.   (Canceled).

16.   (Canceled).

17.   (Canceled).

18.   (Canceled).

19.   (Canceled).

20.   (Canceled).

21.   (Canceled).

22.   (Canceled).

23.   (Canceled).

24.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the special playback data is intra-frame encoded, and the playback data is substantially inter-frame predictive encoded.

25.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the special playback data is intra-frame encoded, and the playback data is substantially inter-frame predictive encoded.

26.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8, wherein the special playback data is intra-frame encoded, and the playback data is substantially inter-frame predictive encoded.

27.   (Canceled).

28.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 10, wherein the special playback data is intra-frame encoded, and the playback data is substantially inter-frame predictive encoded.

29.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 11, wherein the special playback data is intra-frame encoded, and the playback data is substantially inter-frame predictive encoded.